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Consideration of best practices in the implementation of the Convention
Accessibility of information on best practices through the Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal (SKBP) and the Capacity Building Marketplace (CBM)

Accessibility of information on best practices through the Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal and the Capacity Building Marketplace

Note by the secretariat

Summary

In decision 20/COP.12, Parties requested the secretariat to expand the Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal (SKBP) with best practices, inter alia, through cooperation with the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT) on the "sustainable land management technologies, including adaptation" theme. Further Parties requested the secretariat to identify institutions having the required expertise, knowledge and information regarding the remaining six thematic topics, to provide a link to their websites and/or databases where relevant information is made available, and to channel this information through the SKBP and/or the Capacity Building Marketplace (CBM), as relevant.

Also in decision 20/COP.12, Parties requested the secretariat to continue developing and enhancing the SKBP in cooperation with partners in order to increase relevance for the different target groups and to expand the collection of information accessible through the portal to national and subnational actors in particular.

This document contains reports on activities carried out by the secretariat, as prescribed by the aforementioned decisions, with regards to: i) the cooperation with WOCAT, ii) the on-going development of the SKBP prototype in a fully-fledged UNCCD Knowledge Hub, and iii) the CBM.

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I. Introduction and background information

A. Dissemination of and accessibility to best practices on sustainable land management technologies, including adaptation

1. By its decision 15/COP.10, the Conference of the Parties (COP) decided to review the accessibility to information on best practices. It requested the secretariat to identify recommended databases for each thematic topic[1] of UNCCD best practices, to which data and information stored in the database of the performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) should be transferred.

2. Following decision 17/COP.11, the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT) was selected as the primary recommended database for best practices on "sustainable land management (SLM) technologies, including adaptation". On 15 April 2014, an agreement was signed between the UNCCD secretariat and the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) of the University of Bern on improving accessibility to information on SLM best practices, identifying the WOCAT secretariat as executing agency of the agreement.

3. By decision 20/COP.12, taking into consideration the difficulties faced with finding databases relevant to the other thematic topics of best practices, the COP decided that, with the exception of the "SLM technologies, including adaptation" theme, best practices reporting for the other six thematic topics should be discontinued, and reporting entities should be released from the relevant reporting obligations.

4. Furthermore, in decision 20/COP.12, Parties invited WOCAT to establish an online facility to allow country Parties and other reporting entities to continue uploading information on SLM best practices, and make data and information on SLM best practices available by allowing access through the UNCCD portal. Parties also requested the secretariat to identify institutions having the required expertise, knowledge and information regarding the remaining six thematic topics, to provide a link to their websites and/or databases where relevant information is made available, and to channel this information through the Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal (SKBP), the Capacity Building Marketplace (CBM) and/or the UNCCD website as relevant.

B. Improvement of knowledge management and promoting and disseminating best practices

5. By decision 3/COP.8, the COP mandated the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), in cooperation with relevant institutions, to create and steer knowledge management systems aiming to improve the brokering of scientific and technical information from and to institutions, Parties and end users.

6. Furthermore, in decision 1/COP.10, the COP requested the CST and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) to engage in further coordination work relating to the improvement of UNCCD knowledge management in order to provide information that is coherent and easily accessible. This mandate, refined by decisions 21/COP.10 and 24/COP.11, outlines the concept of the SKBP, for which a pilot was developed in 2014.

[1] Annex V of decision 13/COP.9 identified seven thematic topics for best practices under the performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS).

7. In decision 20/COP.12, Parties further requested the secretariat to continue developing and enhancing the SKBP in cooperation with partners in order to increase relevance for the different target groups and to expand the collection of information accessible through the portal to national and subnational actors in particular.

8. Decision 17/COP.11 also requests the secretariat, when further developing the knowledge management infrastructure within the secretariat, including the PRAIS portal and the SKBP, to ensure the interoperability of the systems for the transferability of information.

9. Decision 22/COP.12, inter alia, requests the secretariat to integrate the roster of independent experts database into the SKBP to enable easier and more efficient use of the database.

10. By its decision 16/COP.12, the COP agrees that accessibility of information on best practices through the SKBP and the Capacity Building Marketplace shall be a topic on the agenda of CRIC 15.

11. This document contains reports on activities carried out by the secretariat, as prescribed by the aforementioned decisions, with regards to: i) the cooperation with WOCAT, ii) the on-going development of the SKBP prototype in a fully-fledged UNCCD Knowledge Hub, and iii) the CBM.

II. Facilitating access and promoting the dissemination of best practices on sustainable land management technologies, including adaptation

12. Further to decision 17/COP.11, WOCAT was selected as the primary recommended database for best practices on SLM technologies, including adaptation. The agreement between the UNCCD secretariat and the University of Bern/CDE, stipulates that WOCAT, as the executing agency of the agreement, shall, inter alia, establish an online facility to allow country Parties and other reporting entities to continue uploading information on SLM best practices, and make data and information on SLM best practices available by allowing access through the UNCCD portal/SKBP.

13. A revised reporting template was presented at the fourteenth session of the CRIC, and the twelfth session of the CST. The revised template featured a user-friendly data-entry process based on structured questions complemented by free text entries, and included visual elements and questions on SLM approaches. Parties were subsequently encouraged (as per decision 20/COP.12) to test the revised reporting templates and provide WOCAT with feedback to enable further adjustments and improvements.

14. Furthermore, in 2015 and 2016, WOCAT completed the development of the online facility, incorporating feedback received from country Parties and other stakeholders. In June 2016, country Parties were invited to test the new online facility including the final revision of the template, and provide feedback to WOCAT[2].

15. It is expected by WOCAT that the revised online facility for best practices on SLM technologies including adaption will be available for all stakeholders in August 2016. This platform will include the final version of the revised template based on responses received through the survey.

16. Decision 20/COP.12 also encourages Parties and invites other reporting entities to continue submitting cases of relevant best practices through WOCAT in order to increase

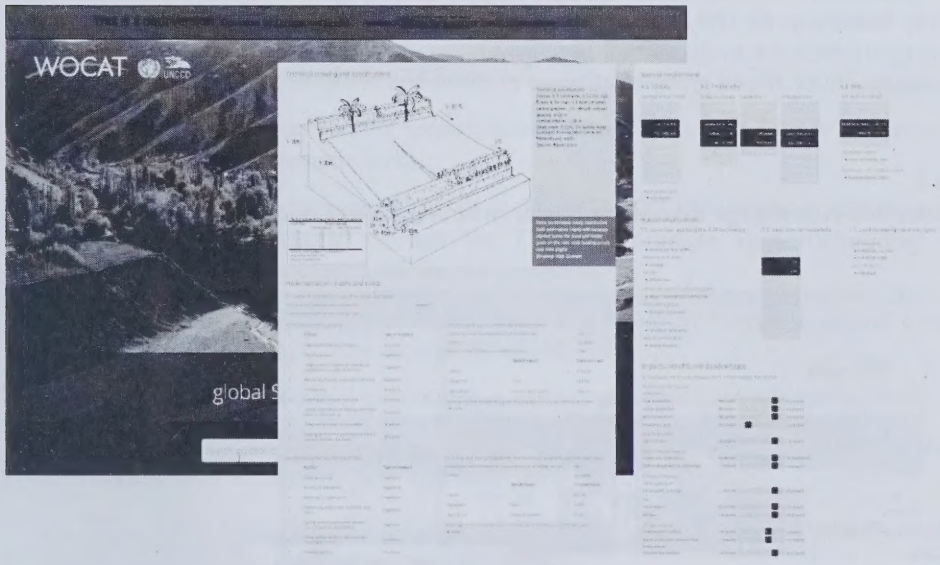
[2] In response to the invitation, 36 surveys were returned, representing 22 countries.

the knowledge base on SLM. Currently, the revised WOCAT database consists of best practices as reported by country Parties through the PRAIS system in the first and second legs of the fourth reporting cycle.

17. In 2016, the secretariat will expand its support to country Parties by offering assistance with and learning materials on submitting best practices on SLM through the WOCAT online facility. Furthermore, WOCAT will update the best practices in the database with practices submitted through their platform by other organizations. All best practices will be available through one interface, while the best practices submitted by country Parties and other reporting entities will be clearly identified as UNCCD best practices.

18. As stipulated in the abovementioned decisions, the newly launched WOCAT online facility enables a structured exchange of information on best practices on SLM, and enables these to be channeled to all UNCCD stakeholders through the UNCCD SKBP.

Figure 1
The World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies online facility (http://www.wocat.net)



III. Improvement of knowledge management

A. The Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal

19. In decision 20/COP.12, Parties, inter alia, requested the secretariat to continue developing and enhancing the SKBP in cooperation with partners in order to increase relevance for the different target groups and to expand the collection of information accessible through the portal to national and subnational actors in particular.

20. The prototype of the SKBP was completed and presented at COP 12 in 2015. Between November 2015 and February 2016, this prototype was finalized and improved with bug fixes and minor interface improvements based on the feedback from a select group of users. Currently, the development of a "full-size" version is well underway. It will

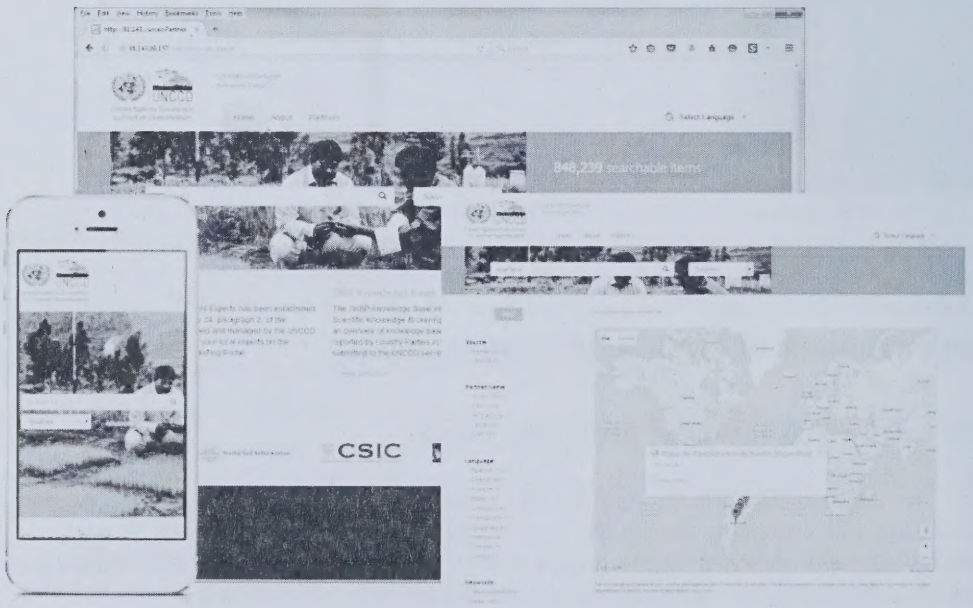
provide a dedicated search engine, many options for interactivity and a focus on solutions/technologies, combined with a wealth of best practices.

21. The "full-size" version of the SKBP is designed to function as a broad knowledge hub for UNCCD stakeholders. In addition to the search system and the online information from the UNCCD Library, it includes links to information to support the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) target setting programme run by the Global Mechanism, as well as other desertification, land degradation and drought related topics, by providing access to best practices and other knowledge sources from a large number of partner organizations. The 'full size' version of the SKBP will be promoted amongst users as "the UNCCD Knowledge Hub".

22. Following decision 22/COP.12, paragraph 2, the UNCCD Knowledge Hub will integrate the roster of independent experts to enable easier and more efficient use of the database. Current work is underway by the secretariat to provide the option to search for experts by discipline and country, and to provide links to other databases of relevant experts, as appropriate. Furthermore, the secretariat will provide all experts nominated by country Parties with an opportunity to update the information in their own profile on the UNCCD Knowledge Hub.

23. Furthermore, the secretariat is improving its knowledge management infrastructure in 2016, including the PRAIS portal, the UNCCD website and the CBM, and the Knowledge Hub/SKBP to ensure the interoperability of the systems for the transferability of information.

Figure 2
The Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal (http://skbpbeta.unccd.int/)



B. The UNCCD Capacity Building Marketplace

24. Pursuant to the stipulations of paragraph 6 of decision 20/COP.12, the CBM undertook several actions including:

(a) Providing links to relevant training courses and other capacity-building programmes offered online by a variety of sources, including the private sector, and to opportunities offered by community-based and on-the-ground/local organizations;

(b) Developing specific relations with several universities to help promote the courses they offer in these subject areas;

(c) Working with several universities to help them develop courses in these subjects;

(d) Creating a crowdfunding and donation page and inviting Civil Society Organizations registered with the UNCCD to be listed there and to use it as a power tool to secure funding and carry out other resource mobilization activities;

(e) Specifically relating to participation, collaboration and networking, opening the CBM to all free of cost; building a strong partner network with other relevant capacity-building initiatives, including the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and several universities; expanding the links it offers; and offering Parties, institutions and individuals the opportunity to make their offers and needs in capacity building known to the world;

(f) Developing a learning video channel where lectures and other resources are made available on these thematic areas.

25. In accordance with paragraph 7 (a) of decision 20 COP.12, a series of activities were undertaken by the secretariat through the CBM to promote capacity-building and awareness-raising. These included but are not limited to:

(a) Hosting several competitions, including an ideas competition and a story competition involving people from around the world;

(b) Organizing several exhibitions at various universities to raise awareness;

(c) Organizing and hosting a film screening on World Day to Combat Desertification 2016 in collaboration with other units of the secretariat;

(d) Expanding the offers made on the CBM in terms of languages, overall numbers and topics;

(e) Organizing and participating in lectures at various learning institutions, including schools, colleges and universities, and sharing information material there;

(f) Broadening and enhancing the internship/mentoring programme offered through the CBM;

(g) Building a greater partnership with community-based organizations through, inter alia, greater outreach and making direct offers of online training to them;

(h) Preparing and offering new online courses on the UNCCD processes and the issues of SLM in general;

(i) Organizing and hosting two round-table discussions for youths on the topics of the UNCCD processes and SLM;

(j) Developing specific relations with several universities to help promote their courses on SLM via the CBM;

(k) Working with three universities to develop and offer Massive Open Online Courses on the UNCCD, LDN and SLM;

(l) Providing a platform for all stakeholders to contribute (not merely receive) to the capacity-building process for an efficacious implementation of the Convention.

26. Pursuant to paragraph 7 (d) of decision 20/COP.12, covering the issues of the policy, legislative and institutional framework, the CBM has undertaken the following actions:

(a) The revision and enhancement of the capacity-building page on the national action programme process;

(b) The conceptualization and initial design of a capacity-building page to support national efforts to achieve LDN;

(c) A comprehensive review of the capacity-building efforts of the secretariat and enhancement of the role of the CBM in the same. This review is still to be completed;

(d) Offering a complete compilation of all decisions, resolutions and declarations taken by the COP, which provide the policy and international normative framework for capacity-building within the framework of the UNCCD.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

27. Parties at CRIC 15 may wish to consider the proposals contained in this document with a view to initiating early consultations on draft decisions to be forwarded to COP 13:

(a) The cooperation between the UNCCD secretariat and WOCAT enables country Parties and other reporting entities to structure and upload new best practices on SLM in order to facilitate the dissemination of this knowledge to all stakeholders. As stipulated in the above-mentioned decisions, the newly launched WOCAT platform facilitates a structured exchange of information on best practices for SLM, and enables these to be channeled to all UNCCD stakeholders through the UNCCD Knowledge Hub/SKBP.

(b) The UNCCD Knowledge Hub/SKBP, in the process of further development, is designed to serve the knowledge needs of all UNCCD stakeholders by providing access to best practices and other knowledge sources from a large number of partner organizations.

(c) The secretariat shall continue developing and enhancing the UNCCD Knowledge Hub in cooperation with partners in order to expand the collection of information aggregated to the portal. The UNCCD Knowledge Hub shall facilitate and promote access to relevant knowledge, from multiple sources and through various communication channels, using the internet and mobile phones.

(d) The CBM has proven to be an effective tool in terms of promoting and enabling capacity-building activities and supporting awareness-raising activities for the UNCCD.

(e) The CBM shall broaden and enhance its capacity-building efforts relative to the policy, legislative and institutional framework of the UNCCD, inter alia, through the further development of e-learning courses, and in cooperation with partner organizations.

(f) The secretariat shall continue operating the CBM, in accordance with the available resources, following the secretariat's review of its capacity-building efforts and the role of the CBM in the same.

(g) The secretariat shall continue to develop and operate the knowledge management infrastructure, in accordance with the available resources, to ensure the interoperability of the systems, allow for transferability of information between the secretariat's systems, partners and other stakeholders, and ensure efficient channeling of knowledge and information to all UNCCD stakeholders.

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